

WASHINGTON, DC (May 4, 2009) – Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-IL, sent a letter today to Attorney General Eric Holder to complement President Barack Obama's termination of U.S. torture policy authored by the Bush Administration and called on the Attorney General to appoint a Special Counsel or Independent Commission to investigate whether crimes were perpetrated during the implementation of the torture program. The letter is attached below:

The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC. 20530

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

As a member of Congress deeply concerned about the Bush Administration's interrogation policy, I want to congratulate President Barack Obama on barring the use of torture and abuse and disclosing important documents on the past use of torture. These steps have moved the United States towards restoring the rule of law, upholding our American values, and enhancing our country's national security.

Now that the Obama Administration has taken these steps, I am writing to request that you appoint a Special Counsel or Independent Commission to investigate whether federal criminal laws were violated by anyone involved in the development, authorization, ordering or implementation of the Bush Administration's policies and practices regarding the interrogation of prisoners. The newly disclosed Justice Department memoranda, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross' 2007 report finding that the federal government engaged in torture, make clear that a full top-to-bottom criminal investigation of possible torture crimes is warranted.

There is mounting evidence that the Bush Administration systematically implemented, from the top down, detainee interrogation policies that constitute torture or otherwise violate the law. Therefore, I believe that an immediate investigation is warranted to determine whether actions taken by the former president, former vice president, their Cabinet, or other officials of the last Administration violated the War Crimes Act (18 U.S.C. 2441), the Anti-Torture Act (18 U.S.C. 2340-2340A), and other U.S. and international laws. I also believe that it is necessary to appoint a Special Counsel or Independent Counsel in order to ensure that a thorough and impartial investigation occurs, and that the prosecution of anyone who violated federal criminal statutes prohibiting torture and abuse is pursued if warranted by the facts.

Again, I commend the Obama Administration for ending the misguided interrogation policies of the Bush Administration that relied on torture and strongly urge you to appoint a Special Counsel or Independent Commission to investigate the actions taking by the Bush Administration to determine if laws were broken. I look forward to hearing from you in response to our request.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress